

Message Text

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TO USMISSION GENEVA

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FOR CARTWRIGHT

FOLLOWING REPEAT ALGIERS 679 ACTION STATE INFO RABAT ROME TUNIS

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QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ALGIERS 0679

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: EAGR, AG

SUBJ: EFFECTS OF DROUGHT ON ALGERIAN AGRICULTURE

USDA FOR FAS

REFS: (A) ALGIERS 0307 (B) ALGIERS 0515 (C) ALGIERS 0220

(D) ALGIERS 0156

1. DR. CHARLES BALDI, FRENCH RESEARCH EXPERT
AT THE WORLD METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE OF THE UN,
GAVE A LECTURE IN ALGERIA ON "EFFECTS OF THE
WINTER 74/75 DROUGHT ON ALGERIAN AGRICULTURE"
ON MONDAY, MARCH 10, 1975.

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2 DR. BALDI SAID AUTUMN RAINS IN ALGERIA WERE SATISFACTORY EXCEPT IN THE WEST. THE RAINS STOPPED EARLY, HOWEVER, AND BY JANUARY A POTENTIALLY CATASTROPHIC SITUATION WAS DEVELOPING. IN THE LAST MONTH OR SO ENOUGH RAIN HAS FALLEN IN THE ALGIERS AREA AND EASTERN REGIONS OF ALGERIA TO LARGELY ALLEVIATE THE DROUGHT. ALGIERS AREA NORMALLY RECEIVES TOO MUCH RAIN IN ANY CASE, SO THIS YEAR'S LOWER THAN NORMAL RAINFALL IS NOT DANGEROUS FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE CENTER OF ALGERIA. HOWEVER, THE CONTINUING DRY SPELL IN THE WEST, THRU DECEMBER, IS THE FIRST IN THE HISTORY OF AVAILABLE STATISTICS (SINCE 1840). THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION THERE IS VERY BAD, AND WORSE IN MOROCCO. ORCHARDS AND VINYARDS ARE NOT TOO BAD OFF WITH THE EXCEPTION OF OLIVES, WHICH WILL SUFFER A GREAT DEAL. IN GRAINS IT IS A CRITICAL SITUATION (IN THE WEST) THAT ONLY A WEATHER MIRACLE COULD SAVE. BALDI PREDICTS A WHEAT HARVEST OF 50 PERCENT LESS THAN LAST YEAR WHICH WAS NOT A GOOD YEAR EITHER. THIS WILL PUT ALGERIA IN A SERIOUS DEFICIT GRAIN POSITION AND HE THUS FORECASTS THE NECESSITY OF IMPORTANT PURCHASES OF FOREIGN WHEAT. THE ALGERIAN'S BEST CHANCE OF RECUPERATING SOMETHING FROM THIS HARVEST WILL BE TO USE THE GRAIN AS FEED AND HAY. BALDI FEELS THIS WOULD BE A BETTER USE OF THE EXTREMELY POOR QUALITY HARVEST THAN TO TRY TO USE IT AS WHEAT.

3. BALDI ALSO COMMENTED ON ALGERIA' SNEED, IN HIS OPINION, TO GO INTO WHEAT IRRIGATION PROJECTS, SUCH AS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN MEXICO.

4. A CHECK WITH GERMAN AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE, UK AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR AND AMERICAN CYMMET EXPERT ALL AGREE WITH BALDI'S PREDICTION OF A GRAIN HARVEST OF ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF LAST YEARS. OFFICIAL ALGERIANS ARE USUAL NON-COMMUNICATIVE SELVES ON HARVEST. DROUGHT AREA EXTENDS INTO CENTRAL ALGERIA ONCE ONE PASSES OVER FIRST BARRIER OF MOUNTAINS. OUR BEST ESTIMATE OF LAST YEAR'S CROP WHICH WAS NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A GOOD YEAR, IS UNDER ONE MILLION TONS, SO THIS YEAR'S PRODUCTION WILL BE IN 500 THOUSAND TON AREA. OUR ESTIMATE OF ALGERIAN CONSUMPTION IS NOW AROUND 2.5 MILLION TONS, SO ALGERIA WILL BE IMPORTING SOME 2 MILLION TONS OF WHEAT OVER NEXT TWELVE MONTHS. ESTIMATES OF AVERAGE ALGERIAN PRODUCTION ARE DOWN TO 4 - 6 BUSHEL PER HECTARE FROM 12 TO 14 UNDER THE FRENCH IN THE LATE 1950S. PARKER UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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